DOCUMENT RESUME

ED 408 467 CE 074 268

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TITLE Member Handbook and Leadership Guide for Minnesota Technical Program Advisory Committees.
INSTITUTION Minnesota State Council on Vocational Technical Education, St. Paul.
PUB DATE Apr 97
NOTE 47p.
PUB TYPE Guides - Non-Classroom (055)
EDRS PRICE MF01/PC02 Plus Postage.
DESCRIPTORS *Advisory Committees; Community Colleges; Group Dynamics; *Guidelines; *Policy Formation; Postsecondary Education; Program Development; Program Implementation; Secondary Education; Technical Education; *Technical Institutes; Vocational Education; *Vocational High Schools
IDENTIFIERS *Minnesota

ABSTRACT

This handbook and leadership guide for members of technical program advisory committees is a product of the Effective Advisory Committees Project conducted by the Minnesota State Board of Technical Colleges and the State Board of Education. The purpose of the project is to increase the effectiveness of the vocational advisory committees in Minnesota's high schools, secondary cooperative centers, and technical colleges. The handbook and leadership guide incorporates into its 6 chapters 50 indicators that the project identified as consistent with the behavior of effective advisory committees. The chapters cover the following: (1) organizing an advisory committee (purpose, structure, practices, and policies); (2) helping the committee members become acquainted; (3) life cycles of committees and members (4) working together as a group (solving problems, making decisions, planning, forecasting trends, and anticipating the future); (5) making meetings work (managing a meeting); and (6) making meetings work (the necessity of a committee workplan). Members of the advisory committee for the project are listed. (KC)

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ED 408 467

State Council on Vocational Technical Education

State of Minnesota

MEMBER HANDBOOK AND LEADERSHIP GUIDE

FOR MINNESOTA TECHNICAL PROGRAM ADVISORY COMMITTEES

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MEMBER HANDBOOK AND LEADERSHIP GUIDE FOR MINNESOTA TECHNICAL PROGRAM ADVISORY COMMITTEES

April 1997

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Edited by Duane A. Rominger
and Michael L. Rask

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ACKNOWLEDGMENTS

This handbook and leadership guide for members of program advisory committees is one of several pieces of the Effective Advisory Committees Project, a longstanding initiative of the State Council on Vocational Technical Education. The project began with five years of on-site evaluations of general and program advisory committees at all 34 technical college campuses. The on-site evaluations and the work of the Task Force on the Effective Advisory Committees Project led to the development of the working paper, *Fifty Indices of Effectiveness Regarding the Program Advisory Committees in Minnesota's Technical Colleges*. The *Fifty Indices* in turn led to the development of this guide, which describes the meaning and use of each indicator.

Like an effective advisory committee, this handbook exemplifies the collaborative process. The work group which developed the Handbook involved representatives from the technical colleges, the University of Minnesota, the private sector, and the State Board of Technical Colleges. The Effective Advisory Committees Project received longstanding state level assistance from the State Board of Technical Colleges and the State Board of Education. Final publication of this *Member Handbook* was supported with Carl Perkins funds from Minnesota State Colleges and Universities (MnSCU) and the Minnesota Department of Children, Families and Learning. This support from both secondary and postsecondary sources is most appropriate during this period of transitional thinking in public workforce education and training. Today, we cannot afford to think in terms of just terminal programs at different levels of education and training because the students and clients of a workforce education and training system will take advantage of a *continuum* of lifelong learning and training opportunities throughout their careers.

Many people, too numerous to name individually, have been involved in various parts of the Effective Advisory Committees Project; however, each person's involvement and input has been crucial to improving the effectiveness of advisory committees at all levels of technical education. Both the process and the products from the Effective Advisory Committees Project have received national recognition as a model for improving the quality of partnerships between educators and employers. The ongoing cooperation of all those involved with the Effective Advisory Committees Project and vocational technical education is necessary for the continuous improvement of the processes used to manage the general and program advisory committees in Minnesota's schools and colleges.

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board members and preparation and field testing of a leadership guide and a member handbook for both secondary and postsecondary advisory committees. Original field sites were Dakota County Technical Education Center; Freshwater Education District; Oak Land Vocational Center; six school districts, i.e., Anoka-Hennepin, Mounds View, Osseo, Rosemount-Apple Valley-Eagan, St. Paul, and Spring Lake Park; and six technical colleges, i.e., Albert Lea, Brainerd, East Grand Forks, Minneapolis, Northeast Metro, and Pine. The Council received approximately 50 positive and helpful open-ended evaluations on the leadership guide and 200 on the member handbook.

As the Council had anticipated, one immediate result of the evaluations was to establish the need to prepare separate sets of materials for advisory committees but not neglect the need for materials at both the secondary and postsecondary levels for general advisory committees and advisory committees for student services. Finally, the evaluations stressed the need for resource materials on professional and policy development activities as well as on the development and dissemination of resource materials on the actual operations of the advisory committees.

The next accomplishment of the Effective Advisory Committees Project was the publication in the winter of 1991 of a Working Paper, *Fifty Indices of Effectiveness Regarding the Program Advisory Committees in Minnesota's Technical Colleges. Fifty Indices* was prepared by John W. Mercer and Greg R. Meunier on behalf of the Council's Task Force on Effective Advisory Committees in the Technical Colleges. The Task Force identified fifty activities (indicators, indexes, or *indices*) that were consistent with the behavior of effective advisory committees. The prologue to the *Fifty Indices* states that the indicators "provide a clear, comprehensive conceptualization of the nature, role, behavior, services, and products desired of program advisory committees in the technical colleges." The prologue continues:

> The task force succinctly states that the purpose of an effective program advisory committee is to provide "on-going evaluation and consultation on the curriculum." Why? To keep it current with the knowledge, skills, attitudes, and values identified by industry representatives as being necessary for students to learn and use in order to work effectively in their chosen fields. An industry prescribed-and-validated curriculum—not one prescribed and validated by any other source—is the objective. All other indices are secondary to this keystone index (1991, vii).

A word of explanation about the keystone indicator is in order. Technical programs are organized into courses. A program advisory committee is responsible, therefore, for advising on both individual courses and the overall program. The initial task of an advisory committee is to prepare a biennial workplan organized into two annual

INTRODUCTION

This handbook and leadership guide for members of technical program advisory committees is one product of the Effective Advisory Committees Project, an ambitious and longstanding Council initiative undertaken in collaboration with the State Board of Technical Colleges and the State Board of Education. The overall purpose of the Effective Advisory Committees Project has been to increase the effectiveness of the vocational advisory committees in Minnesota's high schools, secondary cooperative centers, and technical colleges.

The Effective Advisory Committees Project began in the mid-1980's with a request from the State Board of Technical Colleges to the Council to conduct evaluations of program and general advisory committees at all 34 technical college campuses. During the period that the Council was conducting the evaluations, Council staff also conducted an extensive review of the literature on advisory committees. The results of both applied research efforts indicated a strong need for clear guidelines and resource materials for general and program advisory committees at both the secondary and postsecondary levels.

On July 25-26, 1989, the Council held a two-day Roundtable, "The Effective Advisory Committees Project: Setting the Stage for the Next Step." The program covered the accomplishments of the Project to date:

- presentations on the role of advisory committees in:
  a) quality management in vocational technical education,
  b) effective recruitment and training of advisory committee members,
  c) a model of the different roles and responsibilities of staff and program advisors in vocational program development, and
  d) the nuts and bolts of producing a curriculum with the help of an advisory committee.
- two panel discussions on the work of the Project

Proceedings from the Roundtable were published in Communique, the Council's newsletter (Vol. 6, Nos. 1-2, 1989-90).

Other early accomplishments of the Effective Advisory Committees included statewide workshops for program staff, advisory committee members, and school

calendars of tasks which show 1) how the committee will evaluate both the overall program and the courses within it, and 2) how the committee will develop new material for existing courses and programs.

As defined in the *Fifty Indices* report, the next task of the Effective Advisory Committees Project was to develop a working draft of a *Handbook and Leadership Guide for Members of Program Advisory Committees in Technical Colleges*. The indices of effectiveness were seen as being the "organizing elements" for the handbook and leadership guide "with instructional materials to be developed to assist the reader in achieving each index" (1991, ix).

The Member Handbook and Leadership Guide for Minnesota Technical Program Advisory Committees

The eleven-member work group which developed the member handbook and leadership guide did, in fact, use the *Fifty Indices* as the basis for organizing their task, meeting several times during 1993 to do so. The goal of the work group was to prepare a working draft of the member handbook and leadership guide to be field tested during 1994 and then revised as necessary before publication of the final handbook and guide.

In preparing the handbook and guide, the work group developed five questions to be discussed in relation to each of the fifty indices:

1) What does it mean?
2) What value does it have?
3) How do I make it work?
4) How do I use it?
5) How do I know I did what I said I was going to do?

This *Handbook and Leadership Guide* presents the fifty indicators in their original order, although many of the indicators have been revised. The original indices are printed in italics throughout this guide. The work group expanded on each indicator as work group members felt necessary. Some sample documents illustrating the kinds of records and reports program advisory committees may choose to maintain or prepare appear throughout the handbook and guide.

The handbook does not contain examples of all the kinds of documents and reports that advisory committees may wish to prepare. The handbook and guide contains examples of basic operational records program advisory committees need to

maintain, but it does not contain examples of course evaluations, guidelines for the development of new courses and programs, a biennial workplan and annual calendars into which the workplan will be subdivided, or mission and vision statements.

Although this document was designed initially to support the development and work of general and program advisory committees at the postsecondary level, many of the indicators in this document translate well to the administrative support of effective advisory councils sustaining the development of regional and local School-to-Work systems. Thus, the original *Fifty Indices* and this *Member Handbook and Leadership Guide* remain current in the present atmosphere of educational system reform. To underscore this currency, the State Council has chosen to change the original title of this handbook to *The Member Handbook and Leadership Guide for Minnesota Technical Program Advisory Committees.*

CHAPTER ONE

ORGANIZING AN ADVISORY COMMITTEE: PURPOSE, STRUCTURE, PRACTICES, AND POLICIES

Purpose

1. *An effective advisory committee provides ongoing evaluation, consultation, and research on the curriculum to keep it current with the knowledge, skills, attitudes, and values collaboratively identified by representatives of the education and industry partnership. The resulting curriculum provides the necessary foundation for lifelong learning and employability.*

An effective advisory committee has one primary purpose—to review issues related to program and course curriculum and to make appropriate recommendations.

Members of the advisory committees focus on **WHAT** needs to be taught to prepare the individual student to be effective and successful in the workplace rather than how it will be taught.

Discussions about curriculum might include topics such as specific curricular content, new occupational technologies, interpersonal skills needed for the workplace, current software, the type of equipment being used in industry, and anticipated environment and workplace trends.

It is not the responsibility of the committee to advise on the nature, ways, and means of instruction of the program, or other non-curricular tasks.

Student effectiveness includes not only acquiring specific skills but also developing the ability to work well with other people and being able to balance work with family responsibilities and other interests.

The outcomes expected when a program has received effective curricular advisement are:

a) Students are well-prepared for the workplace and have positive comments toward the quality and relevance of their education. In addition, the students are satisfied with their education and recommend the program to others interested in the field.

b) Students are prepared for lifelong learning and employability.

c) The employer is satisfied with the skill level that the student brought to the workplace.

d) There is continual demand for graduates of the program by industry.

2. *An effective advisory committee functions as a necessary partner in the collegiate structure and process for planning and continuous improvement.*

Faculty, staff, administration, and industry members need to work continually on improving their partnership in order to maintain an up-to-date and future-focused program. The partnership doesn't just happen; time is invested in the process and each partner is equally important in the improvement process.

In order for the effective advisory committee to perform its work with the program curriculum, it needs strong administrative support as well as the designation of specific times to accomplish the work.

3. *An effective advisory committee articulates short- and long-term goals and objectives for the program.*

The effective advisory committee looks and plans beyond the "here and now" by providing a vision of the future workplace. The workplace vision for a program sets the context for determining where the program is at the present time, where it needs to go, and what the program needs to be like. It also helps the staff and advisory committee develop a plan to achieve those goals. Without a workplace vision, the program may likely become complacent and obsolete, being of little benefit to the student or the workplace. The committee should be able to answer the question, "What is the program about now and what would we like the program to be in next year and in the years to follow?"

The 16 questions listed below provide a structure for use by committees for advising the school on review and development of courses and programs.

Program Review

1. What is the value of this program?
2. How does the program currently serve the needs of business and industry?
3. How could the program be improved?

4. How do the individual courses meet the needs of business and industry?
5. How do the individual courses contribute to the lifelong learning needs of the individual?

Course Review

1. What is the value of this course?
2. How does the course currently serve the needs of business and industry?
3. How could the course be improved?
4. What knowledge, skills, attitudes, and values taught in this course meet the needs of business and industry?
5. How does this course fit in a continuum of lifelong learning?

New Program Development

1. What is the value of the proposed program?
2. How will the proposed program serve the needs of business and industry?
3. How will the proposed program be improved?
4. How will the individual courses meet the needs of business and industry?
5. How will the individual courses contribute to the lifelong learning needs of the individual?

New Course Development

1. What will be the value of this proposed course?
2. How will the proposed course serve the needs of business and industry?
3. How will the course be improved?
4. What knowledge, skills, attitudes, and values taught in this course will meet the needs of business and industry?
5. How will this course fit in a continuum of lifelong learning?

Structure

4. *The size and composition of an effective advisory committee are appropriate to meet the educational, economic, social, and cultural obligations of the program and the college.*

There is no set guideline as to the number of people who serve on an effective advisory committee. The size of the committee is based upon the tasks of the committee as defined in the school's mission statement, the school's policies on appointment of committee members, and the committee's biennial workplan. The committee should be large enough so that it is representative of education and industry yet small enough to be easily manageable and able to achieve its goals. A

committee should not be so large that members have to compete for speaking time on the agenda.

The optimum number of people attending a committee meeting is ten to fifteen. The issue, however, is actual attendance. Generally, about 75 percent of the people expected to attend will be present at any given meeting. The group may also vary in size with the nature of work that is to be accomplished. Some projects may require a larger size group with greater diversity and more contributing members, while other projects may necessitate having a small diverse group of contributing members. When the group is large, there may be too little opportunity for members to talk; when the group is small, there may be too few members to engage in conversation.

Practices

5. *An effective advisory committee provides for an appointment process and rotational membership with an established proportion of appointments expiring each year.*

An effective advisory committee has established practices and policies for appointing members to the advisory committee and determining the duration of member terms. The length of the term is usually three or four years. Normally one-fourth or one-third of the members' terms expire each year. The expiration does not necessarily mean the loss of a "good" member as he or she may be reappointed to serve a subsequent term. Experienced members should be encouraged to suggest candidates for new membership. Rotational membership assists in providing a committee with diverse opinions and viewpoints, allowing it to remain viable and effective.

6. *An effective advisory committee meets often enough:*

   a. *to give the members opportunities to become acquainted, establish working relationships, and develop a sense of community;*

   b. *to develop, implement, and evaluate all aspects of the committee's biennial workplan designed to provide evaluation and consultation for the program's continuous curricular development and renewal (see Index 50); and*

   c. *to ensure that education and employment transitions are seamless.*

Committee members need to learn other member's perspectives, motivation, values, and the strategies they like to employ to achieve their goals. In addition, committee members need to know the purpose of each meeting and have the agenda at least five to seven days prior to the date of the meeting. The committee has a collective obligation to perform a single purpose and needs to develop collective responsibility. A major influence in developing the sense of collective responsibility is the frequency

of member contacts. The frequency of meetings also depends upon the type of work the committee is attempting to achieve. New advisory committees or those working on a timely project may need to meet once a week for a period of time. Other committees may need to meet monthly, quarterly, or even biannually.

7. *An effective advisory committee annually elects a chair and vice chair who are not employed by the college.*

The chair is responsible for the development of a meaningful agenda and presides over meetings. The chair does not, however, have sole responsibility for developing an agenda. An agenda is written in cooperation with the vice chair, staff, administration, and committee members. The chair also presents the actions and recommendations of the committee to the school. The vice chair will serve in the absence or as the delegate of the chair. The chair and vice chair roles are most effectively carried out by responsible advisory committee members elected by their peers.

8. *An effective advisory committee has adequate and appropriate administrative and clerical staffing to achieve its purpose in a timely fashion.*

The school recognizes that the effective advisory committee provides a legitimate function and allocates resources for its operation. Needed resources include appropriate staffing for taking, transcribing, and distributing minutes as well as other necessary support tasks. The responsibility of staffing is campus-based and determined by the school.

Policies

9. *An effective advisory committee operates under published, regularly reviewed, and readily available collegiate policy and procedures that define:*

   a. *the purpose of program advisory committees;*

   b. *committee size, composition, and diversity;*

   c. *the appointment process, terms of membership, and rotation of staggered membership;*

   d. *the annual election of the committee chair and vice chair; and*

   e. *the process for the committee's presentation and the college's response to all committee recommendations for continuous curricular improvement.*

These steps clarify the purpose and role of an effective advisory committee. In order for policies to be effectively communicated and recorded, they must be written. Verbal policies cannot be effectively distributed and available to all who need the information. The importance of this point cannot be overemphasized.

CHAPTER TWO

HELPING THE MEMBERS BECOME ACQUAINTED: FIRST THINGS FIRST

Relationship Building

10. An effective advisory committee knows, understands, and uses appropriate relationship building exercises.

Relationship building means taking the time to allow committee members to get to know one another, develop trust in one another, and grow to depend on one another. Relationship building (or team building) enhances the process of becoming a team of people who respect each other, are willing to take personal risks when contributing to the work of the group, and are committed to the success of each individual group member and of the committee as a whole.

The use of relationship building exercises is necessary during the first few committee meetings and periodically thereafter. It is initially beneficial to have each member introduce and provide a bit of background information about herself/himself at the first few meetings and continue with introductions and sharing values, beliefs, and observations thereafter.

Also, during the first or any subsequent meeting, the leader/facilitator may ask questions and elicit responses, such as those in the following **sample exercise**:

I. What are your expectations of me as leader/facilitator?

1. Exercise common courtesies.
2. Keep on task.
3. Guide toward frame of reference/vision.
4. Be patient with group members.
5. Be active listener.
6. Buy coffee or other refreshments.
7. Give responsibility to group members.
8. Maintain a high level of energy and interest.

II. What are your expectations of each other?

1. Exercise common courtesies.
2. Be active learners.
3. Be friendly critics.
4. Be patient with the pace and process of the group.
5. Take responsibility for the work of the group.

III. What are leader/facilitator expectations of committee members?

1. Exercise common courtesies.
2. Be active learners.
3. Be friendly critics.
4. Be patient with the pace and process of the group.
5. Take responsibility for the work of the group.

The leader/facilitator may take time at the end of meetings to ask members if they feel as though they are a part of the group or what they thought of the relationship building exercise. This could be communicated either verbally or in written form and turned in anonymously. Significant indications of the positive effects of relationship building are a steady attendance record, courtesies extended with the group, and active participation of committee members.

CHAPTER THREE

KEEPING THE BLOOD NEW: LIFE CYCLES OF COMMITTEES AND MEMBERS

Member Life Cycles

Member Recruitment, Selection, Appointment, and Retirement Policies

11. *Members of an effective advisory committee are recruited and selected on the basis of established criteria and appointed and retired in accordance with collegiate policy.*

Technical colleges or high schools and current advisory committee members need to discuss, plan, and assign criteria for membership. The use of established criteria provides a straightforward way to inform current and potential members of the qualifications for becoming a member and how/when to leave the committee. The established process results in member selection that "works" for the committee and benefits the program. A question that effective advisory committee recruits often ask is "What is the length of the appointment?"

Just as recruitment is crucial to a committee's success to keep a fresh, up-to-date, interested group in operation, retirement is equally important. Members who "retire" could possibly graduate from the committee and serve a mentorship role to a new advisory committee or an emeritus program could be established for retired members. It is also possible, of course, that members may be reappointed to serve a subsequent term.

Written policies governing committee membership are crucial so that members are operating under the same frame of reference. For example, a member should know that if he/she misses "x" number of meetings in a row or "y" number of meetings over a given period of time, he/she will be asked to resign from the committee.

The process is not policy unless it is in written form and communicated to committee members.

Member Orientation

12. *Member orientation is an ongoing process, not an event, and is provided regularly for all members relative to the committee purpose, function, structure, goals and objectives as expressed in the committee workplan (see Index 50).*

To begin the new year, a formal orientation will help acclimate both beginning and seasoned members to the effective advisory committee process. A time intensive process once a year and a shorter orientation at the beginning of each meeting is a wise investment. Members need and want to know the stated purpose of the committee, how to get things done, and their specific role in the committee. The orientation process makes people feel comfortable because they know what the rules are.

It is crucial to stress that, orientation is not an event, it is an ongoing **process** that requires member input. Information obtained from members about committee policies and procedures need to be used to improve the committee process at the very next meeting, not sometime "next year."

Member Participation

13. *Members of an effective advisory committee, in advising on the curriculum, must regularly attend committee meetings, share their occupational expertise, and inform the program of current and future workplace needs of students, employees, and employers.*

Effective advisory committees need members who are committed to the group, show up for meetings, and contribute to the group process. Members need to have expertise about the program area and a workplace vision about future needs and a willingness to share it.

Students have complex and varying needs. Committee members need to start thinking about the "24-hour person" so that family, student home, community, economic, and industry issues are considered in program and course curriculum.

Member Development

14. *Members of an effective advisory committee are lifelong learners who acquire knowledge and skills to improve their effectiveness both as committee members and as participants of the workplace.*

If the school is truly a learning environment, one couldn't be a part of an effective advisory committee without learning. Committee members will continue to learn about the job skills needed for the program area, the school, the students, and the

purpose of the committee. Members need to be lifelong learners and leave the meeting feeling that they, too, have acquired growth, development, and insight.

Members must be motivated to take advantage of learning opportunities. The school will provide opportunities for the members to learn through their committee experience as well learning from the committee members. For this exchange of knowledge to occur, it is necessary to allow time for the committee members to learn during meetings. The learning could occur through the use of guest presenters, industry tours, member presentations, or allowing members time to talk openly to each other.

Two possible outcomes include:

1) members will be more effective within the committee, and

2) members will be more effective as participants in the workplace.

Member Evaluation

15. *Members of an effective advisory committee regularly evaluate their individual and group performances and use the information for continuous improvement.*

It is important that both formal and informal evaluation procedures be followed. Members may be asked:

"How do you feel about how and what you've been doing as a committee member?"

"What was our purpose?"

"What was positive?"

"What was negative?"

Another question that could be asked is, "What do you think we did today?" Generally, if member responses match the agenda items and content, then the committee accomplished that particular set of goals for the meeting. Some members may be more comfortable writing down responses to the questions rather than verbalizing them; both are acceptable.

Member Recognition

16. *Members of an effective advisory committee are formally recognized for their contributions to the continuous curricular improvement of the program.*

Even with all the technology offered today, the most important things in everyone's life are still written by hand—that is, medical prescriptions, checks, and thank you notes. In addition to handwritten notes or verbal recognition of accomplishments, members may receive recognition through the giving of "appreciation certificates" or through letters sent to their employers. The letters should state that the employee has been appointed as a member. Follow-up letters to employers should list activities and accomplishments of the member. The school could also list member names in annual reports. People enjoy and appreciate seeing their name in print!

Most importantly, recognition means paying attention to what the member has said or accomplished, responding, and saying "Thank you." The following letters are presented as illustrations only and are not intended to be replicated. Letters should answer the "who, what, where, when, why, and how" questions and should be genuine to be effective.

Sample Letter #1

December 5, 1996

Mr. John Kaminski
3637 Shady Oak Lane
Anywhere, Minnesota 12345-7890

Dear Mr. Kaminski:

Thank you for agreeing to serve as a member of the Advisory Committee to the Firefighter Program at Anywhere Technical College. Advisory committees play an important role at Anywhere Technical College. Each college program has an advisory committee consisting of representatives of the industry served by the program. The major purpose of the committee is to advise college staff on curriculum to ensure that the program requirements meet current workplace standards.

The committee is composed of people who work at various levels in the field. The role of the committee is to provide closer cooperation between the workplace and education. This cooperation helps ensure that the college provides appropriate technical education for students. Because of your knowledge and experience, you can perform a valuable service to the college and the community.

Prior to each meeting you will receive a meeting notice with agenda, minutes of the previous meeting, and other pertinent information.

If you would like a letter sent to your employer announcing your appointment to the advisory committee or if you have any questions, please call me at 218-xxx-xxxx. Again, thank you, and I look forward to working with you on the advisory committee.

Sincerely,

Katharine Alexander
Advisory Committee Chairperson

KMA/bt

Sample Letter #2

April 21, 1999

Ms. Jackie Bronson
2516 Paul Bunyon Drive
Anywhere, Minnesota 12345-7890

Dear Ms. Jackie Bronson:

I regret that you were unable to attend the Anywhere Technical College Annual Advisory Appreciation Dinner. At the dinner we gave special recognition to members who have served on committees for more than two terms.

Since you were not there to receive recognition, I am enclosing your Certificate of Appreciation. On behalf of the program staff, administration, and the College Board, I would like to thank you for your commitment to the Automotive Service Technician program. It is this kind of support and involvement that keeps our programs strong.

I look forward to seeing you at advisory meetings in the future.

Sincerely,

Katharine Alexander
Advisory Committee Chairperson

KBA/bt

Encl.

Member Selection Criteria

Occupational Expertise

17. *Members of an effective advisory committee for an instructional program are selected primarily for their occupational expertise.*

Each member is expected to be knowledgeable in the field at the time of appointment and has a future workplace vision.

Committees also need diversity—the members should be drawn from both small and large companies, management and labor, other educational institutions, both genders, and people of different ethnic backgrounds. Diversity of people within the advisory committee will provide for discussion and strengthen the group. If all members in the group thought alike, talked alike, and agreed on the same issues, one would need only a single member.

It is possible that a committee member may be the spouse of someone who is employed in the industry area. The spouse of a truck driver would certainly bring a perspective to an advisory committee member different from what the driver might.

Also, members may need to be encouraged to raise questions and "play" roles at times that may be outside their personality.

Industry Perspective

18. *Members of an effective advisory committee are aware of broad workplace trends and prevailing social and economic issues.*

Effective advisory committees rely heavily on members who know and understand the past, present, and future of their work environment. They must have the broadest possible perspective of the field and be representative of both small entrepreneurial interests and of major corporations. The members also need to understand the predominant community issues.

Members need to have or acquire an understanding of the transitional phases that students encounter. For example, when becoming students, many people lose benefits such as health insurance and their major source of financial support. Students may have additional needs for childcare or assistance in seeking a part-time job. Many may experience difficulties balancing school, work, and family life. The life of the student changes again while entering or re-entering the workforce. If committee members do not have an understanding of these issues, it is appropriate to create a general awareness of them within the committee.

Peer Recognition

19. *Members of an effective advisory committee have the respect and recognition of their colleagues and associates.*

Members of advisory committees know and are known in their industry. Not only do they have expertise in their field, but they should also understand people, interact well with others, and possess the respect of colleagues and others in their communities.

Effective advisory committee members communicate positively with each other. Differences among people may be readily observable in meetings, however, members can set aside their differences and interact respectfully with each other.

Interest in Student and Program Well-Being

20. *Members of an effective advisory committee are aware of the program being advised and show a genuine interest in its vitality and the well-being of its students.*

As part of the ongoing orientation process, the school provides opportunities for members to become familiar with and understand some students personally. Members should, for example, know the average age of students in the program, how far they drive or commute to school, their student debt load, childcare needs, and whether or not they are employed outside of school.

It would be helpful to have the committee members spend time with students in the classroom, during breaks, or during lunch. Another possibility is that a student could spend time with a committee member at her/his place of employment which could benefit both the advisory committee member and the student.

Commitment

21. *Members of an effective advisory committee participate in the work of the committee and attend its meetings.*

Committee members are expected to attend all meetings and are expected to participate fully in the activity of the meeting. Once goals are set, members need to dedicate the time needed to meet or even exceed those objectives.

Membership Diversity

22. *The diversity of membership of an effective advisory committee is representative of:*

    a. *Gender, disability, age, race, and ethnicity;*

    b. *Occupational levels within the industry;*

    c. *Program students and graduates;*

    d. *Organized labor;*

    e. *Company types, sizes, structures, and operational philosophies;*

    f. *Trade, professional, and civic organizations;*

    g. *Community-based organizations and social service organizations;*

    h. *Rural, suburban, and urban communities; and*

    i. *Other secondary and postsecondary educational institutions, both public and private.*

The effective advisory committee offers a balance of depth and breadth in its membership. Members should represent geographical areas where students will seek employment—generally, this includes both small towns as well as the Twin Cities metropolitan area. Diversity in membership offers the committee a broader perspective of work and non-work issues related to curriculum.

If the committee has a diverse membership, advertise that fact. A roster of membership could be posted on the classroom/laboratory door or in a program directory. The composition of the committee sends a clear message about the program and the attitudes of its staff.

The location of the meeting should also be changed from time to time to even out the travel requirements for committee members and to cause them to visit parts of their region or community with which they might not be familiar.

Staff Participation

23. *An effective advisory committee includes among the participants in its meetings the instructional, student support personnel, administrative, and other staff affiliated with the program being advised.*

Without actually attending the meeting, staff (teachers, department chairs, vice presidents, counselors) really don't get the whole meaning of the interaction and activities taking place. Dynamics of the meeting cannot be adequately conveyed through the distribution of minutes; therefore, attendance at the meeting is vitally important. Staff need to be excused from other responsibilities to be present at advisory committee meetings and hear the discussions on a first-hand basis.

CHAPTER FOUR

WORKING TOGETHER AS A GROUP: SOLVING PROBLEMS, MAKING DECISIONS, PLANNING, FORECASTING TRENDS, AND ANTICIPATING THE FUTURE

Knowledge and Skills

24. *An effective advisory committee uses established techniques for group problem solving and decision making.*

The orientation serves to inform members about the techniques used for problem solving and decision making. Decisions aren't made; they evolve over a period of time. Planning isn't an event; it's a process. Members learn up front how to go about this process and follow established strategies.

Short- and Long-term Planning

25. *An effective advisory committee uses established processes and procedures for short- and long-term planning.*

The effective advisory committee follows deliberate, agreed upon processes to accomplish goals. The group is expected to forecast and plan for both short- and long-term objectives, to solve problems, and to make decisions. To be effective, the committee works simultaneously on several different planning levels. These levels are defined and spelled out in the biennial workplan, which is both a planning document itself and a document which specifies the short- and long-term planning tasks of the committee.

As an example of a short-term planning process, general advisory committees frequently update course outcomes based on their own continuous course and program evaluation process. As an example of long-term planning, advisory committees are encouraged increasingly to consider trends in the workforce, economy, education, work/family, and other areas and take these into account in their program development activities. Increasingly, it is important for the advisory committee to spend some time considering how the program and its courses fit into the lifelong learning needs of the individual moving through a continuum of workforce education and training opportunities; thus, the transferability and

universality of the skills taught in the program and its courses are important. Most advisory committees will probably choose to prepare vision statements from time to time—statements which summarize committee members' best sense of workplace needs five, ten, or even twenty-five years from now.

Also, the biennial workplan is an important part of determining whether or not the committee has accomplished its objectives.

26. *An effective advisory committee uses appropriate techniques for futuristic forecasting and anticipatory planning.*

The term **Anticipatory Planning** suggests there are two activities involved in attempting to determine a future direction for a curriculum. The **anticipatory** part of planning means that one is trying to understand the past and the present well enough to be able to project where things are likely to go in the future. At the same time, in order to create a realistic future plan, there is a need for self-understanding, such as how one thinks and what one prefers.

There is no specified amount of time to complete the process. It is group sensitive. It may take one month for one group and one year for another group. The Council recommends, however, that advisory committees decide early how frequently the group needs to meet. If the committee is advising a program area that is experiencing a rapid change in technology, the group may need to meet monthly. If the committee is advising a program area that is experiencing slight periodic change, a quarterly meeting may be sufficient.

The overall mission of the effective advisory committee is to ensure that the program and course curricula are up-to-date and future-focused. The committee should do whatever it takes to secure these outcomes. Job security for students and instructors of the program depends upon how well prepared students are when they arrive at the work site.

Planning has specific written steps that define the process for achieving the vision for the future. The planning activity involves breaking down what is anticipated for the future into logical pieces that may be arranged along a timeline. The next step is to determine who is responsible for the individual pieces and decide when to achieve the curriculum goals.

In attempting to develop both short- and long-term plans, the following should provide useful guidance:

1. Based upon what is known about the past and the present, what will be the future demand for workers in this skill area three to five years from now?

2. What are the new skills that will be needed? What existing skills will need to be modified with new equipment, new materials, or new work processes?

3. How is the workplace (procedures, policies, workstation layout, expectations, co-worker relationships, work flow systems, etc.) changing?

4. What are the trends for equipment used in the work station?

5. What is the long-term outlook for the skill area? Does it look as though the demand will increase? Is it declining? Will it eventually become obsolete?

To get started, the committee could develop a set of files relevant to monitor trends and changes in the skill area. At each advisory meeting members could be encouraged to bring or send newspaper and magazine articles and notes about topics they feel might be a trend in each area of interest. For example, there may be files on equipment, work station changes, demand for workers, or economic factors.

Following are concepts related to the **Anticipatory Planning** process:

Paradigm	Our own personal mind set: how we think, our values, what we believe, how we look at the world, our attitudes, our approach to and reaction to problems, change, or opportunities.
Culture	The world around us, the organization in which we work, other people and what they do, think, and say as a group. The environment in which we live, work, and play. "The way we do things around here." Rules. Ethics. Regulations. Laws. Economy.
Extrapolated future	Facts of past performance projected forward without any changes considered; that is, continuing to do the same things in the same way. In a sense, history repeated.
Preferred future	Each person's vision or idea of what he/she would like to see happen in the future. Each person's desired result at some unspecified time in the future.
Integrated future	All of the above four areas considered when establishing a realistic idea of what the future will hold. The most realistic idea of a future result that a person or group can imagine after considering all of the facts, history, environments, ideas, hopes, and dreams involved.

Mission	A short written statement of "why the organization exists" or an explanation of its purpose. The shorter the statement the easier it is for people inside and outside the organization to remain "tuned in" and supportive.
Direction Statements	Written ideas of where or what we are going to do next in some undefined period of time. "What we are trying to do" statements or "what we are trying to be" statements guide the decisions and actions of a person, a group, or an organization.
Goals/objectives	Specific things we are trying to accomplish in a given time frame.
Tactics	Answers the "how" question on each goal. Identifies resources (budgets, facilities, equipment, people) available to carry out the actions and puts them in proper priority and sequence to accomplish the goals.
Feedback & analysis system	Defines what things (facts & actions) we will keep track of to help guide us towards our goals. "The scoreboard" so to speak. Includes who and how often the information is to be generated and disseminated.

Facilitator Competencies

27. *An effective advisory committee uses a facilitator for problem-solving, decision-making, forecasting, and the full range of planning activities.*

The effective advisory committee is directed by someone with the skills to guide the group through the needed processes of setting goals and meeting objectives. The facilitator provides a neutral influence, is process oriented, and has no ownership toward outcomes of the group. It is often necessary for the facilitator to take a strong leadership role.

28. *The facilitator of an effective advisory committee demonstrates knowledge and competency in the following skills:*

    a. *Observation,*

    b. *Listening,*

    c. *Evaluation, and*

    d. *Feedback.*

A good facilitator is a good communicator and performs a neutral role within the group. Feedback means that the facilitator tells people **what** they did, not **why** they did something. The focus is the interaction of the group.

Recommendation Process

29. *An effective advisory committee operates according to collegiate policy that addresses the development, presentation, and response process relative to committee recommendations for continuous curricular improvement.*

School policy is distributed to committee members in written form. The job of the committee is to make recommendations within school policy guidelines. The committee may even make the recommendation to "keep doing what you're doing." If the committee is not taking any formal type of action, then it is not serving a purpose.

Committee members expect to hear a response regarding their recommendations within a reasonable period of time, such as 48 hours to acknowledge and 60 days to update or respond. The committee could also assist in eliciting a response by indicating when they need or want a response. Some responses may be deemed more timely than others as the life cycle of recommendations vary.

Group Ownership

30. *The members and staff of an effective advisory committee develop a positive sense of ownership in the work of a committee.*

The members of the committee will actively participate in the group process, will be committed to the role and mission of the committee, and will work to accomplish its objectives. "Things will get done and members will show up because ownership generates action."

CHAPTER FIVE

MAKING MEETINGS WORK: NUTS AND BOLTS OF MANAGING A MEETING

Preliminary Planning Considerations

31. *The meetings of an effective advisory committee are held at times and locations most accommodating to the majority of the members.*

A process of finding the most accommodating time and location could be established through the use of a scheduling chart. Members are asked what day of the month and time of day are most convenient to meet and meetings are scheduled accordingly. After finding a convenient time for meetings, establish a regular meeting sequence, such as the second Tuesday of each month at 3:30 p.m. The meeting date and time may be kept the same from month to month unless major shifts in members' lives occur, making it necessary to change the meeting day and time. If meeting times vary, encourage members to bring their calendars to each meeting and schedule the next meeting before ending the current meeting.

The overall suggestion for meeting times, days, and location should be based upon simplicity. Members should not feel pressured to attend a meeting during their busiest time of day and should be comfortable while attending the meeting. Consider who the committee members are and how they earn their living. Shopowners, for example, may not be able to attend afternoon meetings; that's the busiest time of day for them, so try scheduling a breakfast meeting, a late afternoon meeting, or an evening meeting.

32. *The meeting facility, furnishings, equipment, and other amenities are provided to accommodate the needs of a diverse membership.*

Committee members are guests of the school and should be treated as such. We pay special attention to our guests and do our best to provide for their comfort and assist in their efficient travel to the meeting site.

People have certain needs to function actively within a group setting. For example, if a meeting is going to last more than 45 minutes, provide a beverage, even if it's just ice water. During the winter, provide a place to hang coats.

Meetings should be held in buildings that are accessible to all people. Also, members need maps to building locations and signage to direct them to meeting rooms.

Members will appreciate the amenities and feel comfortable at the meeting. The extra time it takes to prepare for the meeting will be worth the effort because this effort expresses to the members that they are needed and appreciated at the meeting.

Also, in setting up the meeting, appropriate resources are needed. Are packets of information available for all members and guests? Is there proper lighting, enough chairs, and is the facility comfortable?

Procedural Considerations

33. *An effective advisory committee begins and ends its meetings at the appointed times.*

34. *An effective advisory committee stays on both task and process.*

35. *An effective advisory committee allows sufficient time to transact its business.*

Having a realistic agenda with the most important work scheduled first will help to keep the group on task. Meetings should not exceed two hours unless the group previously agreed to extend the time. Starting and ending times should be communicated and followed.

The process of the meeting should be explained, letting members know what will happen during the course of the meeting. The tasks within the meeting should remain focused on the designated purpose of the meeting. Occasionally facilitators should stop to ask if there are any questions and to ensure that members are comfortable with the decisions made up to that point. Keeping the committee on both task and process is generally the role of the chair or the facilitator.

36. *An effective advisory committee uses established rules and procedures in the transaction of its business.*

37. *An effective advisory committee allows for the full and open discussion of issues, including controversial ones.*

38. *An effective advisory committee uses the college's established and published processes for curricular review every time it meets.*

39. *An effective advisory committee allows sufficient time to learn and use group processes and skills for problem solving, decision making, forecasting, and the full range of planning activities.*

Members will want know how to participate within the group. The orientation process should be helpful to members to let them know the rules and processes. Each school should develop its own rules and procedures for the operation of advisory committees. The rules and procedures of an individual advisory committee should adhere to the school policy governing advisory committees and should explain the following:

Purpose
Membership
Authority
Responsibilities
Organization
Officers
Terms of Office and Membership
Meeting Specifics

The agenda should be mailed or faxed out at least one week prior to the meeting to allow members to attend the meeting prepared for discussion. Members need to be empowered and encouraged to speak freely. Supporting or review materials should be provided to members prior to the meeting.

The members need to have permission to speak openly about controversial issues in order to make accurate and useful decisions.

Essentials Between Meetings

40. *An effective advisory committee uses established standards of performance, including those related to following up and following through on all its work.*

Established standards of performance are developed and followed. For example, every suggestion should receive a response within "x" amount of time. Answers should be received at least before the next meeting and need to be in context of the situation.

When necessary, members should be notified by telephone to be informed of important developments.

Meeting Calendar

41. *An effective advisory committee meets according to a calendar designed for the timely development, implementation, and the evaluation of its workplan as it relates to achieving the short- and long-term goals and objectives of the college.*

The effective advisory committee needs to meet as often as necessary to get its work done. The school needs to know what it wants and expects out of its committees.

If there is the need for a subcommittee or volunteers, solicit for these people during the regular meeting so all members are aware of what's going on.

Meeting Purpose and Agenda

42. *Each meeting of an effective advisory committee has a stated purpose and a published agenda designed to achieve the stated purpose.*

The agenda will specifically state, "The purpose of the meeting is . . ." and the group will work to achieve that goal. Without a stated meeting purpose, there's no reason for a meeting.

The following is a sample agenda format:

COLLEGE LETTERHEAD

Notice of Meeting: Name of Committee

Location: Address and Directions
(Include Map)

Date: Day, Date, Month, Year

Time: Time of day, a.m. or p.m.

Purpose of Meeting: To. . .

Agenda

1. Call to Order
2. Introductions of Committee Members and Staff
3. Approval of Minutes of Last Meeting
(Discussion items need to be taken up early on the agenda. Informational items may appear later on the agenda.)
4. (Agenda Item)
5. (Agenda Item)
6. (Agenda Item)
7. (Agenda Item)
8. (Agenda Item)

Please return the enclosed response sheet or call _____ at

_____ to indicate your attendance at the meeting.

43. *The agenda for a meeting of an effective advisory committee is developed by the committee members and the committee chairperson in consultation with the program staff and college administration.*

The committee can basically assist in generating the outline of the agenda for the next meeting before finishing its current meeting. Members discuss what issues will be addressed at the next meeting and therefore will not be surprised by the agenda. It is the responsibility of the committee leadership to assign times to agenda items and to prioritize them. The action to be taken should be listed on the agenda.

Meeting Notice

44. *The notice of a meeting of an effective advisory committee tells committee members all the pertinent information they need to schedule and to attend the meeting.*

The agenda is to be mailed to members prior to the meeting date, specifying the meeting time and location. It is helpful to include maps with the agenda as well as other pertinent information related to the purpose of the meeting. It should never be assumed that people know where they are going. Other materials may include previous meeting minutes and reports that will be discussed. Members need these materials at least one week in advance to prepare for the meeting.

Another good idea is to inform members prior to the meeting of available parking in the area and if they will need change for parking. Let members know where the parking lot is in relation to the meeting location. This will enable members to allow ample time to arrive at the meeting. If possible, prior to the meeting provide all members with a parking sticker or placard that allows easy and free access to parking facilities.

Sample notice for upcoming advisory committee meeting

Notice of Proposed Advisory Committee Meeting

Program Name_____

Meeting Date_____ **Meeting Day**_____

Meeting Time_____ **Location**_____

Administrator in Charge of Meeting_____

Suggested Agenda

____	1	Call to Order
____	2	Introductions
____	3	Approval of Minutes of Last Meeting
____	4	Additional Items to Add to Agenda
____	5	
____	6	
____	7	

(Please check the space before the appropriate number if an attachment is required.)

Initial and Date:

Program Administrator_____Committee Chair _____

Meeting Minutes

45. *An effective advisory committee uses an established format to organize and report the written proceedings of its meetings.*

One should be able to find topics ordered in the same way from meeting to meeting. Minutes should tell where the meeting occurred, when the meeting was held, what actually happened at the meeting, who attended—both members and guests—who was absent from the meeting, and keynotes so that the reader may follow from one issue to another.

Membership Roster

46. *The membership roster for an effective advisory committee is current, complete, and accurate and is posted for public review.*

The membership roster should periodically be updated to ensure correct address, telephone number, and fax information. The roster needs to be reviewed and updated at least once annually to ensure accuracy of information and member status.

Information that may be useful on the roster includes: complete name and title of the member, the name of the organization for which the member works, her or his position title, complete mailing address, home and work telephone numbers, fax number, and the date the member was first appointed to the committee.

Keeping roster information on a computer database would facilitate efficient updating of records and assist in saving time when sending mailings.

Member roles and responsibilities

47. *The primary job of a member of an effective advisory committee is to advise on the curriculum.*

The purpose of the committee is to keep the program staff informed of workplace needs and trends to better prepare learners for lifelong learning, initial and continuing employment.

The committee is performing the proper function if the workplace is satisfied with the graduates of the program and continue to request those graduates to fill vacant positions.

Advisory committees advise on curriculum issues; they DO NOT generally have administrative, personnel, or budgetary functions to perform.

Inappropriate Meeting Behavior

48. *An effective advisory committee deals effectively and immediately with inappropriate meeting behavior.*

All people are treated with respect. The expectations exercise (see Index #10 as one example) establishes rules. When those rules are violated, inappropriate behavior should be dealt with immediately. The expectations exercise is one means of empowering members to deal with inappropriate meeting behavior; the ongoing use of the exercise reinforces member empowerment. Members attend meetings to contribute to the well-being of the program, not to sit and write personal correspondence, read the newspaper, or engage in personal conversations. Not dealing with inappropriate meeting behavior appears to condone and encourage it. Postponing an appropriate confrontation, however uncomfortable, subjects other members to the potential for abuse and wastes everyone's time.

Meeting Evaluations

49. *An effective advisory committee uses an established process to evaluate and improve its operation.*

The committee will critically examine and evaluate the work they've done over the past year. The purpose is to enhance the improvement process. This is difficult to do until a committee learns the process of evaluation. It becomes a tool for talking about what the committee did, how it was done, and how it could be done better.

Specific questions may address:

"What do you think you did?"

"How do you feel about what you did?"

"What was the value of what you did?"

"What was of no value in what you did?"

CHAPTER SIX

MAKING MEETINGS WORK: DRAWING THE ROAD MAP

Committee Workplan

50. *An effective advisory committee develops, implements, and evaluates a biennial workplan to provide ongoing evaluation and consultation on the knowledge, skills, attitudes, and values collaboratively identified by education and industry as being necessary for lifelong learning and employability.*

This indicator completes the circle back to Index #1. It indicates how a committee is working to achieve the vision of the effective advisory committee. Without having a workplan the committee would not be able to know when it has done what it had planned to do.

REFERENCES

State Council on Vocational Technical Education. (1991) Fifty indices of effectiveness regarding the program advisory committees in Minnesota's technical colleges: A working paper. St. Paul, MN: State Council on Vocational Technical Education.

Effective Advisory Committees Project Handbook and Leadership Guide Work Group Members

1993

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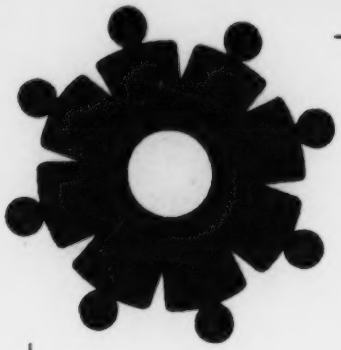

The logo of the State Council on Vocational Technical Education is an abstract representation of the citizen-councilors assembled at a round table. Designed by a commercial art student at Alexandria Technical college, the design was selected in 1982 from 69 entries submitted by vocational students in Minnesota's high schools, secondary cooperative centers, and technical colleges. The Council made its selection on the basis of a recommendation by a panel of representatives from the graphic arts, public relations, and media industries in Minnesota.

Philosophy and Purpose of the Council

The economic prosperity and future of the state of Minnesota and the nation is heavily dependent upon the maintenance of a well educated and trained workforce fitting the labor market demands for employees. Currently, our citizens and the state face a variety of social and educational issues which may limit our ability to prepare our citizens appropriately for productive roles in the state's economy.

The State Council serves as an independent advocate for quality vocational technical education and workforce development. The balance between private sector members and representatives of the vocational education community represented on the State Council will continue to maximize the input of the private sector on policy and program issues addressing the valued concept of "best program fit."

The Council's purposes include:

- Reviewing and recommending policy and law as it relates to vocational technical education
- Conducting and facilitating research focused on vocational technical education program effectiveness and impact
- Extending technical assistance to support implementation of new concepts that have state-wide impact

The test of fit will be reflected in the execution of the Council's purpose as it relates to:

- workforce development system or program improvements,
- changes in standards and evaluation, or
- enhancement of linkages between programs and the private sector, as well as between programs and current and projected demands of the labor market.

Visionary leadership is a value exemplified by the Council as it serves as a public advocate for components of a workforce education and training system. Private sector involvement ensures customer input in the design, implementation, and evaluation of a workforce education and training system. Partnerships between education and the private sector are essential to achieving the measure of fit. The Council serves as a public advocate for components of a workforce education and training system that result in successful transitions from education or social dependency to productive participation in the economic and social communities of our state and nation.

Background

Significant numbers of individuals are alienated from the workforce and have become dependent upon social programs for their existence. Nearly fifty-one percent of Minnesota's population over the age of twenty-five either did not graduate from high school or only just completed high school; both groups lack *any* postsecondary educational experience. Fewer and fewer high school graduates are receiving sufficient course work in vocational education during high school to warrant calling their experience an **emphasis of study** (three or more courses). The cost of higher education has created a personal economic crisis which forces many students to either forego participation in postsecondary education, pursue education or training at the postsecondary level on a less than half-time basis, or incur educational debt that simply can not be repaid in a reasonable amount of time following graduation.

For those persons not completing high school or who earn a diploma or its equivalency and seek no further education, the availability of jobs requiring only low to medium skills is declining rapidly. The traditional market in low-to-medium skill jobs is being replaced by a bipolar distribution of occupations requiring either fewer skills or higher—more technical—skills. This shift in occupational skill levels is beginning to bar many individuals from a job in the workplace that pays them a living wage and gives them the means to support a family.

In the world outside of government, the term **fit** is understood almost universally. When business talks about comparisons of products to markets, labor to production tasks, or pricing to products—the question is always, "Is there a fit?" From this point forward, the State Council will ask, **"Is there a fit between education, the needs of our learners, the needs of the business and labor communities and the economic needs of the state and the nation?"**

The Council believes earnestly that, for the fifty plus percent of the people who may never successfully participate in any postsecondary education, the best fit is a strong foundation in vocational and technical education at the secondary level. For those individuals who will need to upgrade their workplace skills throughout their lifetimes simply to maintain tenure in their jobs, the best fit is postsecondary vocational and technical education. For those individuals who find themselves locked out of the labor market due to either educational deficiencies or lack of marketable skills, vocational and technical education in our technical colleges and community colleges may be their best fit. **Vocational education in our high schools and postsecondary institutions is the state's and the nation's first line of defense against structural unemployment. As a second line of defense, a strong public employment and training system must be maintained to ensure that there are services available for those who have not found success in the public education system.**

John Gardner once said, "The nation which honors shoddy philosophy because philosophy is an exalted activity and scorns good plumbing because it is a humble activity will soon find that neither its pipes nor its theories will hold water." Minnesota must provide transparent access to a first class system of public workforce employment and training services for those individuals who will not go on to college and are in desperate need of labor market sensitive skills. The state must begin to break the cycle of poverty and social dependancy by ensuring that the foundations of workforce education—School-to-Work and secondary and postsecondary vocational education—are honored and supported. **The manner in which a public workforce education and training system fits the needs of the individual, business and industry, and the economic needs of the state will be the central focus of the Council.**

Information on the date, time, and location of meetings and other activities is available by calling the Council offices at 612/296-4202.

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